

REMARKS

New claims 18-26 correspond to previous claims 1-9, and claims 27-29 correspond to previous claims 14-16. Accordingly, claims 18-23 (as well as claims 10-13) are directed to the elected subject matter. Applicant respectfully repeats by reference what is stated in the Reply to Restriction Requirement filed October 25, 2000, namely that all the claims share the same special technical feature, and that this special technical feature is patentable and links the three designated inventions.

As regards amendments presented above, new claim 18 differs from claim 1 by making more clear that the matrix of the filter material is in sheet form. Basis for this can be found in the description on page 3, with the disclosure of gauze materials in line 14, and the stated preference for a matrix thickness of around 3 mm in lines 17 and 18. Furthermore, the "formation of filter sheets" is specifically described on page 10.

The other amendment from claim 1 to claim 18 is the replacement of the words "dispersed a granular formulation of" by "incorporated". This is based in particular on page 3, lines 24-26. Although original claim 4, and page 3, mentioned

a "granular formation" being 'dispersed', original claim 1 was not so limited and it is respectfully submitted that the emphasis, or lack of it, in the description on the granules justifies not including the term I claim 1, whereas the matrix is clearly an important structural part of the filter and (in the form of the discs) is mentioned in almost all of the filter embodiments.

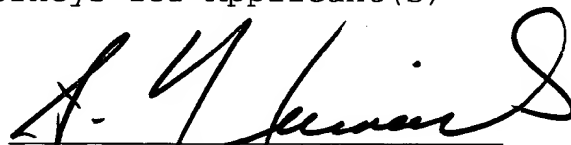
During the international stage (see the IPER) there was a novelty criticism of claims 1-3 on the basis of DE-A-2 358 808, hereinafter D1. While it is agreed that both D1 and the present application disclose a filter material, applicant still maintains that the invention disclosed in D1 does not include a "matrix": one cannot reasonably say that the contents of the container are embedded in the container. However, in order to put the matter beyond doubt we have specified in claim 1 rewritten as claim 18 that the matrix takes the form of a sheet, which is clearly distinct from a container such as a box. In fact, the matrix can itself be disposed in a container. Therefore, the utilization of a matrix, which provides a structural role, is a key feature distinguishing the present invention from the prior art.

Applicant respectfully awaits the receipt of an examination on the merits.

Respectfully submitted,

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